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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a number of theoretical perspectives on child development, the concept of play, and the role of the adult in the play space. It argues for the position that adults must stop planning the curriculum in such a way that it segments and separates various aspects of children's lives and must continually reaffirm the validity of play. General considerations in the development of an outside area for young children include the age group served and their developmental needs, the location of the school/center, the time the area will be used, and the climatic conditions of the region. Specific considerations discussed are local and State regulations for safety; professional standards; assessment of available space; the manner in which the space is set up, equipped, and managed; criticisms of conventional playground equipment; and preparation of the staff, parents, and the children. The paper concludes with an evaluative checklist and a bibliography. (Author/MLF)

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CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPING AN OUTSIDE AREA FOR SCHOOLS/CENTERS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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Considerations in Developing an Outside Area For Schools/Centers For Young Children

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The initial purpose of this paper is to present research on a special problem, of relevance to me, in child development. I chose to explore considerations in developing outside areas for young children because I believe the subject to be a neglected one. I'm glad I did.

Certainly there is abundant research activity at every level of education. But what about "education's most underestimated and most misunderstood facilities" (Dattner, 1971, 18)?

My expanded purpose, then, is to share my findings in a way that will bring attention to outside areas for children. I will criticize and challenge. I will ask you to join me on behalf of the children.

THEORETICAL PRESPECTIVE

In talking about outside provisions for young children we have to consider what we believe to be true about the ways young children grow and learn, the goals of schools and programs, the place of play and the role of the adult. Let's start with the child.

It is not the purpose of this paper to explore in depth theories on child development. It should be noted, however, that there are varying schools of thought, and the extent to which one can clarify his theoretical perspective will have much to do with the way he will consider outside areas for young children.

The most sensitive works on children usually rely heavily on photographs as those who have observed interprete what they have seen. But children are never far from us so I know that images will be recalled as we consider various theoretical positions. Perhaps images built on experience are good measures for what we can accept as truth.

We know, for instance, that in the total absorption of free play, in his unawareness of anything except himself, a child is closest to being and revealing his true self. We can credit Curtis (1917) with this thought but we know it because we have seen it.

The following outlines help clarify the current issues and who stands where. (Fein and Clarke-Stewart, 1973, 202-204)

1. THE MATURATION/ENVIRONMENT ISSUE: CONCEPTION OF THE CHILD

Maturation:	Interaction:	Environment:
The child has it!		We've got it!
(Piaget)		

(Rousseau)	Traditional	Bank St.	Weikart	Painter	Moore	(Locke)
(Gesell)	nursery	Sprigle	Deutsch	Hughes	Resnick	(Skinner)
(Freud)	school		Gordon		Gray	Engelmann
			Nimnicht		Spiker	Bushnell
			Montessori			Ulrich
			EDC			Sesame
			British Infant Schools			Street

2. THE PROCESS/CONTENT ISSUE: GOALS FOR THE CHILD

The Learning Child			The Informed Child
Nimnicht	Montessori	Gray	Engelmann
Sprigle	Bank Street	Gotkin	Scott
EDC	Weikart		Bushnell
Moore			Resnick
Hughes			Spiker
British Infant Schools			Karnes

3. THE HARD/SOFT ISSUE: ASPECT OF DEVELOPMENT EMPHASIZED

Social-Emotional	"Whole Child"	Language	Cognitive	Perceptual
Psychoanalytic nursery school	Bank Street Spiker Keister Nimnicht Caldwell Deutsch British I.S.	Hughes Cazden Schaefer Levenstein Blank Engelmann Karnes [McAfee Gray]	Moore Weikart Palmer Grodon Resnick Gotkin Sigel	Montessori

4. THE "DEPTH OF SOLUTION" ISSUE: LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTEMPTED

Change the Child Behavior	Change the Child Structure	Change Both	Change the Family
Engelmann Bushnell Ulrich Weiss	Weikart Gordon	Gray Karnes Dunham Gordon Weikart Bushell	Gutelius Miller Levenstein

5. THE DEGREE OF STRUCTURE ISSUE: PROGRAM TECHNIQUES

Unstructured				Highly Structured	
Keister Skeels Traditional nursery school	Bank St. EDC Robinson British I.S.	Nimnicht Gray Hughes Sprigle	Montessori Moore Weikart	Karnes Painter	Engelmann Gotkin Spiker Deutsch

6. THE PEOPLE/THINGS ISSUE: AMOUNT OF ADULT-CHILD CONTACT

Teacher-Centered				Materials Centered		
Engelmann Hughes Rheingold Skeels	Bushnell	Deutsch Gray	Bank St. Caldwell	Resnick EDC	Nimnich	Stern Moore Montessori

These diagrams show some of the dimensions of preschool programs. Programs are listed with the names of people or institutions most commonly associated with them. For more details, see Day Care in Context, (Fein and Clarke-Stewart, 1973, 202-204).

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The Social Studies Program of Education Development Center (EDC) advocates an openness that seems most comfortable. (Exploring Childhood, 1972) Recognizing that a great variety of scholars and practitioners are contributing to the field, they make an effort to view each theory as part of a continuing search for understanding in human development. Jerome Kagan describes the two basic dimensions that he sees theorists differing on with the questions, "Is the child active or passive?" and "Is there a goal to development?" (Ibid.p.6).

> The perspective we espouse can be simply stated: human development is a process of continual growth and potential in which the individual, from the moment of birth, both influences and shapes other people and the world around him, and is shaped by those people and that world. This view might be defined as mutuality, reciprocity, or interaction. However defined, the message is that one is influenced by one's past, by one's peers and elders, and by one's culture; but that one is bound by none of these. More than promoting any specific body of information or any particular skill, the goal. . . is to suggest an attitude toward development that stresses the capacity of the person--whether child, teenager or adult--to synthesize his part and continue to grow in relationship with others.

This is a hopeful point of view--full of possibilities for all of us!

What information about young children will be useful in planning their outside area? In Play & Playgrounds (Stone, 1970, 16) we are urged to be aware that healthy children are eager to do. They need calm and dramatic action, both. They long for security and they need to feel that they are making an impact on their environment. Our planning should respond directly to that knowledge in specific ways. (See checklist at the end)

There are, in addition, certain learning patterns characteristic of children that should be reflected in their facilities (Miller, 1972, 20):

1. There is a natural desire in every individual to learn. We should build upon the natural motivation and interest of youngsters.

2. Through doing, significant learning is gained. Individuals learn by active participation.

3. Through opportunities to perceive with all the senses, significant learning is gained.

4. When the individual deals with concretes, instead of abstracts, significant learning is gained.

5. When threat to oneself is low, learning is aided. A distinction should be made between 'challenge' and 'threat'.

6. When the 'whole' person is involved in an experience, learning is more lasting and pervasive.

7. Learning 'in context' is more significant than learning 'in isolation'.

8. All learners are unique. They differ in learning ability, rate and style. Individual differences must be accepted and allowances made for them.

9. Each learner may facilitate the learning of another. Children learn from each other.

These are not new ideas. The challenge is to see them newly applied to the total learning space. They are as essential out of doors as in.

The dominant and common point that researchers are making is that the relationship between the child and his learning environment is critical. Of course, children learn from every environment, but here we are talking about the specific areas within the responsibility of the school or center for young children.

Listen!

> For young children to experience the fullness of being which is the underpinning of mental health, they must experience their bodies and bodily senses with competency and not be diverted

> to the more adult modes of sitting and listening too soon. . .Mastery of the body and its senses as tools for coping with the environment is too basic to selfhood to be ignored, too intertwined with learning in the early years to be bypassed without consequence. The feeling of adequacy and mastery gained in one's muscles and fingers are necessary reserves with which to face the increasingly difficult obstacles that children will need to cope with and conquer as they grow. (Cohen, 1972, 59)
>
> The physical facilities in which we place children are factors in the formation of their growth and development patterns. The physical environment in which we surround formative human beings determines to a considerable degree the energy supply they have to grow, play, work, listen, fight infection, digest food, climb and run; to live. (ACEI Housing for Early Childhood, 1968, 19.)

The student of human development will recognize that the things said here are considerations that can be applied to space where children/people of all ages live, work, play and learn. It is too easy to think that the challenge is only to people concerned with very young children. While this paper is dealing essentially with early childhood, it should be no less provoking to planners at any other level.

Assuming that we accept the necessity to build on knowledge of the child, let's go on to consider the goals of schools/centers for young children. There are half-day and full-day programs for young children under public school age, usually defined as nursery school for the former and day care for the latter. Many variations in programs exist. The point is that the goals of the program should be a factor in planning outside areas. In general, the child participating in an all-day program will need more opportunities for privacy and separateness than the child in a half-day situation where emphasis is likely to be on enrichment and cooperative, group activity during the limited time the children are together. Each school/center should carefully review its purposes for

the children and balance its outside provisions according to the needs of the children participating.

In achieving theoretical perspective, our program purposes must be compatible with what we believe to be true about young children. Basic Propositions for Early Childhood Education is an excellent evaluative tool for this purpose, reminding us that:

> Early childhood education is not an exercise or a schedule or a machine. It is young children exploring their world with sensory thoroughness, experimenting with people and places and materials, encouraged by a teacher who respects and uses their ideas and ways of learning to help them discover what has meaning for them in our society (Law, 1966, 12).

Another key issue in developing theoretical perspective is the concept we have of play. That is a critical point of consideration and is vital to developing spaces outside that reflect that concept. If only we could recognize and accept the growing body of knowledge from the past and present that affirms the validity of play, but it is unrealistic to assume that we are at a point where play is accepted universally as a fundamental aspect of learning. The fact that the place of play is still debatable is often discouraging. Nevertheless, we must continue to interprete and define what we believe about the process of play in the lives of children.

> If we ask ourselves what is play, and how it came to survive in the deadly struggle for existence, we are baffled. Play seems like a useless bit of poetry sadly strayed in the bitter prose of the actual, and we can but speculate in what sort of mail it has clad itself to keep its place in the battlefield of the past; that it was not devoured by the dinosaurus or some other relentless gargon in that deadly struggle to which every useless characteristic of man or beast has succumbed. The only possible answer is that play must everywhere have served some great purpose or it would not everywhere have survived (Curtis, 1917, 1).

Because there is considerable debate and speculation on the nature of play and its place in learning, there is a great deal of research available. It is interesting to sample the various approaches used by those who would interprete play.

Dr. M. J. Ellis was jointly employed by the Illinois Department of Mental Health and the Children's Research Center at the University of Illinois at the time his article, "Today's playground: designed for chimp or child?" appeared in American School and University (August, 1971, 43, 21-34). In managing a research program at the Motor Performance and Play Research Laboratory, he was concerned with the questions, "What is play? Is it important? Why should we be concerned with it?"

In acknowledging the problems inherent in defining play objectively, he bemoaned the "triviality with which many people view play" as a possible result of a cultural orientation toward the work ethic.

Dr. Ellis suggests that a good measure for the importance of play is to see what happens when the opportunity for play is taken away. As evidence, he points to the behavior of animals in badly designed zoos where, having been removed from their natural habitats and associated engagements, they become behaviorally disorganized. Most of us have seen these sad creatures, pacing pathetically in cages cruelly inappropriate to their sizes and spirits.

Dr. Ellis cites evidence from studies that show young children kept in cribs void of sensory stimulation become retarded in all aspects of development. And when primates, rats and dogs are deprived of playful experiences experimentally, they do not develop naturally (Ibid).

Animals can be arranged along a playful, non-playful continuum, according to Dr. Ellis's theory, from neophilic to neophobic. "Play

is the phenomena that derives from an inherited tendency of a neophilic animal to engage in novel interactions with the elements in its environment that are changing" (Ibid). The more playful an animal is, the greater probability that it will have information concerning the multiplicity of elements in its environment, and the more information of this kind it has when changes occur, the greater chance of survival. Seen in this light, play is the "behavior that prepares us for the unpredictable" and should be viewed as the way human creatures research, with direct implications regarding aesthetics and the arts (Ibid).

Carrying Dr. Ellis's thoughts a step further is the idea that play and education are complementary. Education aims to prepare children for what can be safely guessed about the future. Acknowledging that it is unsafe to predict what today's children will need to know or be able to do, education should attempt "to produce a creative problem-solving person. . .In one sense, education is concerned with enhancing neophilia in man. It's processes and products, then, should be similar to those of play." (Ibid).

It is Dr. Ellis's contention that too many playgrounds resemble the "worn stump and perch" of caged animals, and while recognizing that there is no "infallible recipe" for designing a good playground, there are questions and criteria that should be applied in the development process.

While other researchers use a number of these in studying play, the conclusions are often similar.

Architects and planners of children's school/centers wrestle (or should) with these concepts--the nature of the child and the place of play. Richard Dattner, in design for play, focuses on the most commonly held misconception about the place of play:

> Surprising numbers of people still maintain that the primary function of play is to 'let off steam' so that the child can return to the more important business of study and learning. Countless studies show that precisely the reverse is true--that play is the way in which children develop intelligence. To put it simply, play is a child's way of learning (1969, 23).

Dattner explains that it is through the two processes of assimilation and accomodation that the child gradually develops intelligence "from primarily instinctual responses of infancy to the eventual achievement of adult logical thinking. This development takes place in stages, each of which has its characteristic forms of play" (Ibid, 24).

Again, this is not a new idea. Henry Curtis, a researcher on the place of play in the late eighteen hundreds and early nineteen hundreds wrote in Education Through Play:

> It is no more possible to make the child think as a man than it is to make him six feet tall, and we must get away from the idea of school as a preparation for adult life and think of it rather as a preparation of the child for a more successful childhood. Play trains the child in the arts of childhood (1917, 51).

Neither was Curtis the first to put forth such claims.

In a current study, Children Come First, we are given further historical perspective as we are reminded how little scientific data about the child was available when Froebel and his followers, sensitive to the value of play and its importance to learning, made a major breakthrough in educational thought (Murrow, 1971, 151). In his Kindergartens, Froebel took children on long walks and used the outdoors as his classrooms which were then, indeed, children's gardens. The idea that children learn by understanding the world around them is still basic in British primary schools (Ibid).

The Murrows chide, "evironmental studies is a newly coined term for an old English custom: using the outdoors" (Ibid, 207).

> We are coming today to see that the best preparation for life is living; and play, representing as it does the life of the past, is much nearer to a life of business or politics or society than is the schoolroom and its studies. If we seek to train for society, it should be hard to find a better method; for play is codial in its nature (Ibid, 53).

What, then, is play to a child? The point of view that gives life to the more open British primary schools is that "the play of the child does not correspond to the recreation of the adult, but to the work of the adult. Play is the most serious activity in which the child engages (Ibid, 12)."

In an article entitled "Sees Physical Play Slighted as Vital Force in Over-all Growth" (Today's Child, 21, 3), Dr. Mary Moffit, Queens College, speaks of a future-oriented concern for the physical well-being of today's children. Although it is agreed in theory that humans need strong bodies, adults seem determined, in practice, to prevent children from engaging in strength-building activities. Our "dirt-conscious society", Dr. Moffit feels, cautions children to stand, sit and walk erect at all times when it is creeping and crawling, bending and rolling that helps children relieve strain and build strength. "In general", she says, "physical play still is not given its due as a vital force in over-all good growth. . . the importance of physical development is still largely underestimated" (Ibid).

Our concern usually does take a future-oriented form. Our caring should be for a child's today as well as his tomorrow. James Hymes, Jr., Ph.D., a specialist in early childhood education speaks to this point in most of his writings. Providing for the needs of children today, however, will be building an assurance for their tomorrow.

According to research by M. Paul Friedburg, the child does half of his learning before he is four, another thirty per cent before eight and only twenty per cent during the remaining years of elementary and secondary education (1970, 35). Do our priorities reflect this awareness? Do our budgets and energy allowances? Our political attention?

In a current look at play and playgrounds for the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Jeannette Stone sums up the problem:

> If we are convinced of the importance of the early years of childhood we must see outdoor play as part of the educational process, not simply as a means for letting off steam, amusing oneself, or passing time (1970, 20).

Some educators make attempts to get their children outside justifying it solely as physical education; others in the name of science or nature study. This is not fair. Neither is it an accurate interpretation of the place of play in relationship to the outside area and the way it is used. These are, of course, valuable facets of outdoor activity. For instance, Katherine Read Baker, in Let's Play Outdoors! encourages us to think of the outside as something of a laboratory where children can have experiences with physical forces, thereby increasing their understanding of the world which depends to a great extent on a knowledge of physics (1969, 25, 26).

Likewise, research on increased movement opportunities and play for children with special learning problems shows that "kinesthetic development, communication growth, developmental stimuli and social awareness are achieved when the child participates with all of his faculties in the learning process" (Hall, et al., 1972, 580). How can we believe that this is true of children with learning disabilities and not true of all children?

We must be careful to guard against viewing play in narrow terms. ". . .we must not think. . .that play is a physical activity. Play is the life and spirit of childhood, and exercise is only incidental to it. It is no more physical than it is emotional or mental or social" (Curtis, 17). Is it too much to hope that educators will stop competeing for the child's multiplicity of interests and abilities and begin to accept his wholeness?

> A human being is made up of many parts that may be separated for purposes of analysis and study; but he operates as a whole being. To even consider communication or relationship with only part of that being is unrealistic; to attempt to operate oneself on a sequence basis using one part at a time is folly (Rosenblum, 1917, 61).

Good ideas for developing the many play/work functions of an outside area can be found in (see references):

1. Young Children and Science
2. Science Experiences for Young Children
3. Active Learning
4. The Playground as Music Teacher
5. A Classroom for Young Children: "Approximation No. 1"
6. Creative Outdoor Play Areas
7. Helping Young Children Learn
8. From Hand to Head
9. A Child Goes Forth
10. A Creative Playground
11. "Exploring the good earth"
12. new playgrounds
13. Oxon Hill Childrens' Farm
14. the materials from the Soil Conservation Service and Maine Environmental Education Project

The task for the adult in using these resources is to guard against superimposing pre-structured lessons on the already limited outside play time arranged by most schools. Ideally, the adult will be successful in extending classroom experiences outside, thereby introducing more movement and natural interraction into the regular curriculum and nuturing the total learning milieu of the child. It is true that almost anything that can go on inside can take place outside the classroom as well. In fact, the outside offers more encouragement of noisy or messy learning activities which many schools neglect.

Adults must appraise with new insight such statements as this that appeared in the March, 1973 issue of Instructor magazine for teachers:

> Help children to realize that playground activities can enrich leisure time, develop physical skill mastery, and encourage consideration of others (106).

Substitute "teachers" for "children" (who already know about play instinctively) and there will be a basis for beginning. The Plowden Report, in a description of one of Britain's first open schools, gives a far more acceptable admonition for teachers to consider:

> School includes the building, garden, play area, and games space. Outside and inside provide an integrated learning environment (Murrow, 1971, 200).

Considering the place of play in childhood, is like considering childhood, itself. If we believe in childhood we must believe in a child's right to play, willingly accepting the full implications for education. And, if we believe in play, we will join other child advocates, people working on behalf of the rights of children, to see that provisions are made outside as well as inside our schools/centers for young children (all children).

It is clearly my position, based on research and confirmed through observation of children that we must stop segmenting and separating various aspects of children's lives in curriculum planning and that we must continually reaffirm the validity of play. Call it work, if we must, for that it is, and let us stop feeling guilty when it is happening. The child is learning even if we haven't always planned it and can't measure it. Letting children be children takes mature adults who have faith in the integrity of a child's mind and growth processes and who are confident and secure in knowledge of human development.

Finally, then, releasing children, acknowledging their natural growth potential, has to do with one more consideration in reaching theoretical perspective--the role of the adult in the play space. The part played by the adult, teacher, leader or supervisor is of major importance and closely related to every other consideration--the concept of the child, the program goals and the place of play.

It can be a fearful and sad position to want childhood for children. It takes strength and courage to be a child advocate, to say finally, "I will not be afraid". And it takes constant reinforcement to become a positive force for children. It means, I have learned, caring more for the rights of children than political and economic factors and personal criticism. It is a lonely place where educators are unafraid. And too many are they who, to assuage their impotence, would have you join them where there are no waves being made. But the children are enough for a weary crusader.

Given the biases established by this paper it should be fairly clear that characteristics in an adult should be compatible with the concept of child, program, and place of play discussed.

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> . . .our children need to come in contact with teachers who find beauty in a sunset, intrigue in the geometrics of a spider web, thrill to the iridescence of a hummingbird's wings, commune with the serenity of a distant constellation, see the congruity and intricacies in the derivation of a mathematical formula, recognize the orderliness and adriotness of a chemical change. Teachers generate in children an awareness of the world around them. The teacher is the underlying inspiration for a child to become an ardent observer and an insatiable questioner. This person develops in others a compassionate attitude toward his environment and a curiosity with which he goes wondering through life (Costa, 1962, 6).

We can only shake our heads at the number of teachers whose lives are so far removed from the rhythm of the earth that it is highly unnatural and unpleasant under most circumstances for them to be outside. Basic to teaching children the joy of living things is a teacher who feels it.

I was fortunate to see that kind of teacher this spring when our daughter's father and I helped chaperone her fourth grade outing to a state park. It was a coastal setting rich with learning and experiencing possibilities. There was a busload of children and more than enough adults to give a comfortable ratio. The day was beautiful in every way. The most beautiful and memorable part, however, was the way in which our daughter's teacher conducted herself.

It wasn't long after we had arrived and had had picnics when we noticed Mrs. Smith had changed into shorts and was thigh-deep in the ocean with her children, as excited as they about the life around them, finding and sharing one creature or plant curiosity after another. Her enthusiasm was catching. Or, she had caught the enthusiasm from the children. Perhaps both. Regardless, there it was--what we all say it should be like and so seldom get to see! There was an underlying concern for the safety of the children but it was built on confidence.

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In contrast, a few adults, fearful of accidents, kept at a "safe" distance from the boulders and the water, and unfortunately, any of the meaningful experiences that were happening there. Oh, give us the Mrs. Smith's for teachers! And may she have the strength to continue teaching in her open way so that more children will have the rare experience of knowing a teacher who believes in them and in life.

Our schools/centers need open teachers, people who are convinced of the necessity to stay open-minded, to be a learning person.

> My teacher will know that he doesn't know all the answers. He will be able to tell by intuition, sensitive perceptions, or gut reaction ways in which my unique style as a student may be unlocked. He will care enough about me that my mistakes and failures will be okay, so that I will not be afraid to try again. He will let me discover (emphasis mine), to learn the joy, even though he knows an easier way. . .He will show caring about me, but not by the rhetoric that has fooled me before. He will fulfill his role as a teacher because he also will be a real person (Rosenblum, 1971, 6).

> I see the OPEN TEACHER taking risks. . .
> modeling realness. . .
> knowing himself. . .
> taking pleasure in learning. . .
> cognitively understanding group and inter-personal relations. . .
> dealing in the Here--and--Now. . .
> accepting and owning his whole self. . .
> TAKING RESPONSIBILITY (Ibid, 60).

In truth, a teacher makes it possible or impossible.

> An atmosphere of realness--where things can be as they really are--encourages realness, or better yet, allows realness to exist. In such an environment, a child can expose himself. . . The teacher model can let their development take place (Ibid, 56).

This means, to me, that there is no place in early childhood education for pre-packaged plans or systems with their accompanying scripts (called lesson plans) put out by companies who hold less regard for the

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competency of teachers than for the materials that make them money. It means that a good teacher will find step-by-step instructions insulting and at best, poor examples of what might happen in a bad learning situation.

The teacher who can, like some teachers we all know, tell parents this spring what units they will be presenting next year and how many weeks they will spend on each, will do an incredible injustice to children who come to them. Clearly, the curriculum is more important than children and best they not get in its way! We can only ache for children who must spend their growing time with adults who seem blind to the lives they are entrusted with and insensitive to the possibility that they could build learning experiences on the needs of those living beings.

While it is true that the qualities that make a good teacher apply inside as well as outside, the teacher who will be willing to become more natural, to listen more closely to the world around her/him and to respond, to be open to the possibilities in learning that children discover on their own, will be more apt to be a successful teacher beyond the walls of the classroom.

> Selection and presentation of materials and equipment should indicate the adult's basic conception of the process of children's learning and the experiences which need to be provided for enabling their development (Members, NAEYC, 1970, 334).

Having dealt with the various issues involved in reaching theoretical perspective there are certain GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS in the development of an outside area for young children. Obviously, characteristics of a play space should depend primarily on the needs of the children who will be using it and the nature of the available space. What age group will use it? What are their developmental needs? Where is the school/

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center located? When will the area be used? What climatic conditions will have to be accounted for? These are questions that come to mind and which seem to provide the essential foundation for planning. Dr. Fein and Clarke-Stewart, in Day Care in Context, cite the work of J. W. Swift, "Effects of early group experience: the nursery school and the day nursery" from Hoffman and Hoffman's (Editors) Review of Child Development Research:

> No single setting or arrangement of equipment can be considered 'ideal'; the setting must always be considered in relation to the needs of the child and the purpose of the program. For the child with little opportunity to play with other children, or for the withdrawn child whose need is for stimulation toward social play, a setting designed to stimulate cooperation and social interaction may be most appropriate. For the child from a crowded home with many siblings, a setting in which he can remove himself from the group and play quietly alone may be equally important. In considering the day nursery setting as contrasted with the nursery school, it may be appropriate for the former to provide more opportunity for a solitary play, through the provision of greater space and appropriate equipment, in order to offset the fatiguing effects of prolonged social interaction (Fein and Clarke-Stewart, 1973, 261).

In Foundations of Learning in Childhood Education, we are encouraged to look at space through children's eyes that we might be aware of its appropriateness (Leonard et al., 1963, 146). In achieving "aesthetic harmony" and "a rhythmic arrangement" the underlying principles should be "comfort, attention to health, beauty, friendliness in familiar things, curiosity and challenge in what is new and familiar (Ibid, 144, 146)."

Another child-centered approach suggests that inspiration should come from our observations of children (Miller, 1972, 18)"

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What things do children love?
Children love to move!
Children love adventure, thrills, challenge!
Children love to build!
Children love to pretend!
Children love to play in the soil!
Children love to hide!
Children love to throw!
Children love to play with and in water!
Children love to balance! (Ibid, 20)

What can we add that we know about children? Once inspired, we can turn to SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS.

The wise planner will start with local and state regulations for safety and professional standards. Problems in licensing and regulating standards vary from state to state and are discussed at length by Gwen Morgan in Regulation of Early Childhood Programs. There is an "overwhelming desire to insist, require, demand that the programs be good ones. At the same time there is both ambivalence and confusion about the various methods of regulation which are open to us" (Morgan, 1973, 1). The organizations listed in the references section of this paper are excellent sources of professional guidelines for implementing programs and developing areas.

Space is a key consideration. Assessing available space, then, is the next step. Ideally, children should have direct access to the outside from their classrooms. This is a standard recommendation. Generally, 76 square feet per child is considered ample room (Chittenden, et al., 29). The National Kindergarten Association recommends a 50' X 100' area for from 8 to 22 children. "A Guide to Planning Buildings and Playgrounds" by the Kindergarten Association of Western Australia recommends that the minimum space for play, exclusive of buildings activities, thoroughfares, sheds, passages and spaces less than 10' wide, should be 200' per child but a larger area is desirable (ACEI, Housing for Early Childhood Education, 1964). Dr. Katherine Read Baker, authority in the

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field, says, "The number of square feet of space needed per child cannot be stated exactly because many factors influence the figure" (Baker, 1969, 2).

What to do if outside space is limited? Exchanges between city and rural schools is one solution with benefits for both groups from time to time (Murrow, 1971, 233). Bussing children to parks and open spaces is another. Perhaps a school/center could arrange to use a field or unused space away from the building itself if no area is available in the immediate setting. Fortunate the school that has space outside its doors!

Vest-pocket parks are one solution in crowded areas. These mini-play spaces are pictured and described by Dattner, Friedburg, Halprin and Stone (see references) in their reviews of city solutions to open spaces for people's use. Decks, rooftops and barges are among spaces being found and made suitable for play areas in cities (Dattner, 1969).

The space, itself, possesses character that influences children. It is the quality of that influence that we are concerned with and the quality rests on how the space is used. How it is set up, equipped and managed is the next consideration.

A considerable amount of research on the quality of space and its effects on young children is available (Fein and Clarke-Stewart, 1973). It has been found, for example, that the quality of space can be rated according to 1.) degree of organization, 2.) amount of complexity and variety, 3.) amount to do per child and 4.) any special problems (Ibid, 231). In their research, Dr.'s Fein and Clark-Stewart found that the quality of space determined the amount of freedom that can be granted to both teachers and children.

> Space of high quality permitted more diversity and offered many more opportunities for experiences that were highly personal and therefore meaningful.

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> Moreover, the higher the quality, the more likely were teachers to be sensitive and friendly to the children, to encourage them in self-chosen activities, and to teach consideration for the rights and feelings of others. Space allows choice of child-adult and child-child interaction. If the spatial arrangement and the teacher allow the children autonomy, children are involved and interested. Concurrently, teachers have time to observe the children or to interact on an individual basis, without interruption. Thus quality space can provide teachers with the opportunity to know and teach children as individuals, to be more aware of their individual needs, and consequently to play responsive and appropriate programs. This, in turn, leads to more interested and involved child behavior.
>
> Low quality space coerces teachers by forcing them to resume responsibility for order and activity. When spatial quality was low, teachers were more likely to be neutral and insensitive, to use more guidance and restriction, and to teach arbitrary rules of social living. Children were less likely to be involved and interested (Ibid, 232).

In considering the development of quality space, decisions must be made regarding the topographical features of the land and its natural features; mapping and defining areas for different activities; choosing, building, gathering equipment and materials; preparing staff, parents and children for its use.

The many books and articles listed in the reference section will offer many creative and practical suggestions that can be adapted for use in various settings.

> Wherever a tree can grow or any of the earth's raw materials can be preserved, earth's inhabitants immediately feel more at home and at ease (McCord, 1971, 494).

Look at the land. What does it suggest? What possibilities does it hold? Is it still in its natural state or has it like "too many so-called playgrounds" had the play value removed by the destruction of the site's existing qualities (Friedburg, 1969, 22)? Topography can provide a variety of vantage points so important to children.

> A playground can be complex without being chaotic. The topographical anatomy is the foundation for

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> complexity and variety in such a creation as a superstructure that lends itself to addition and inclusion of slides, tunnels and swings. Complexity allows for continued interest, discovery and choice. Choice is the beginning of the process of discrimination, and discrimination is learning. The more choices a child has the more involved he becomes, and involvement connotes a commitment (Ibid, 8).

We should look for, and enhance, or create, topographical interest in outside spaces. Some natural features to look for or build might be hills, mounds; ponds, streams and creeks; boulders; ravines; trees, bushes and shrubs; cliffs and rock outcroppings; large open spaces; paths, trails and walkways and a variety of surfaces (Miller, 1972, 40).

The available space should be mapped with interesting natural features noted. Are there any topographical changes to be made? This information should become the basis for deciding upon equipment and materials to be used in the space. If there are trees suitable for climbing, for instance, time and money can best be spent to fill some other need. Defining areas or centers is the next step. Principles behind the arrangement of learning and interest centers are the same as those underlying classroom set ups for young children. Consider the functions discussed in the place of play section of this paper and how they can be facilitated. When that has been decided, the general areas can be defined. An examination of some of the books listed in the references section will give many actual plans and layouts that exemplify the putting into practice of the considerations discussed in this paper.

Page 24 shows one design which contains a few basic provisions that will go far in providing excellent play/work potential for young children.

Fencing is essential to the outside perimeter of an outside space for very young children. It should be substantial and sufficiently high to give children and teachers a feeling of security. The type of fencing will depend on the location of the school/center. Fencing on a farm

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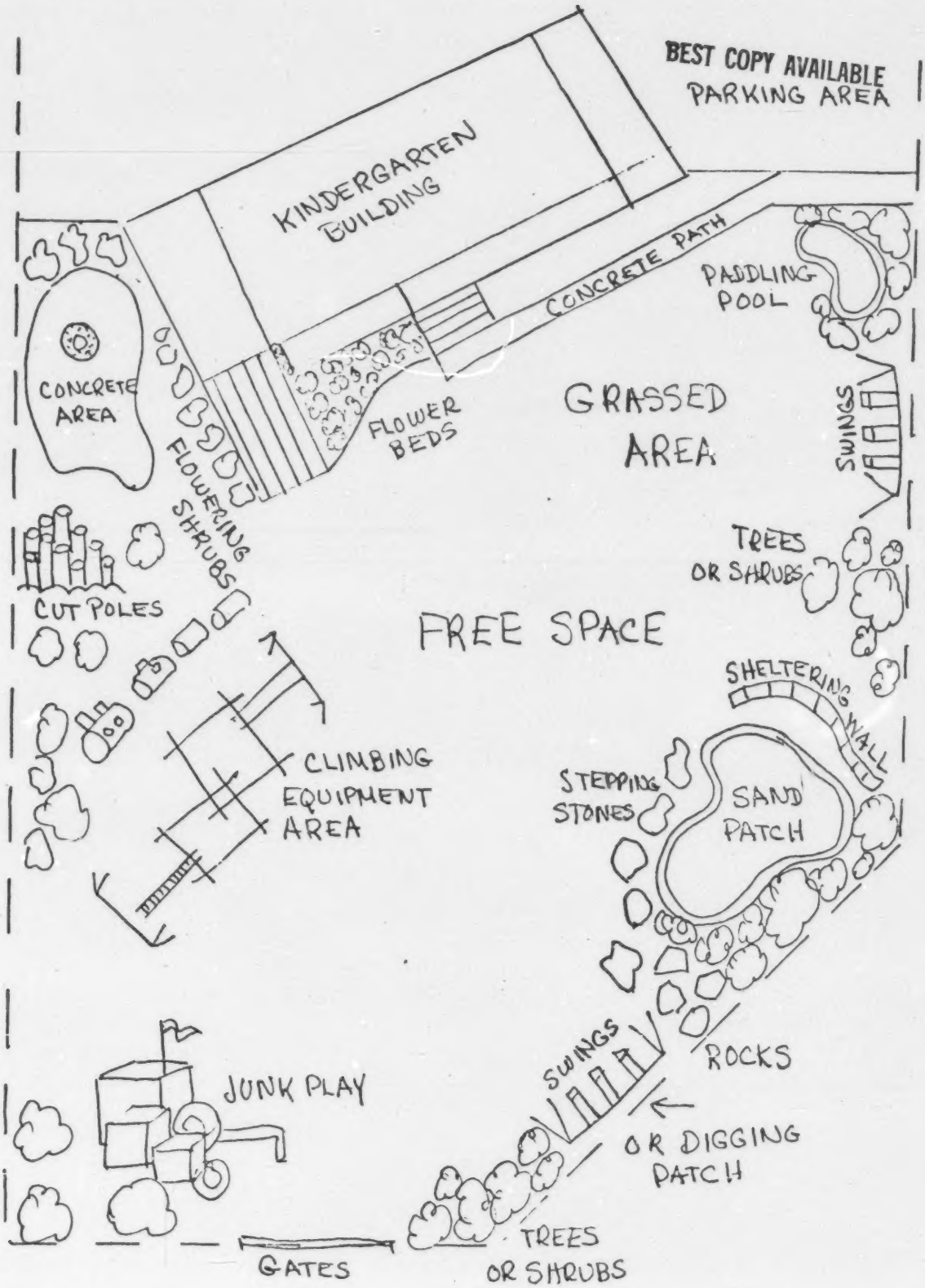

From
Housing For Early Childhood Education, page 73.
Association for Education Childhood International

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school, for instance, would serve a much different purpose than fencing on a busy city street. Fencing should give protection and privacy without concealing the world outside from curious children (Baker, 1969).

In defining centers within the total area, various lower fences or landscaping techniques are useful. These demarcations should lend intimacy without obstructing the view of supervisors in the area. Further, these definitive materials can serve as climbing or stepping structures as well, and can be planned in such a way as to enhance what Friedburg calls the "linked play concept" (1970, 44). That is, a smooth, uninterrupted traffic pattern where children can move naturally from one center to another, where choices and possibilities go on and on. In design for play, Dattner suggests using the shopping center plan which locates popular structures at opposite ends of the space with other items between (88).

Equipping the spaces will be exciting for it is at this stage that the work will come together as a whole.

> A playground should be like a small-scale replica of the world with as many possible of the sensory experiences to be found in the world included in it. Experiences for every sense are needed, for instance; rough and smooth objects to look at and feel; light and heavy to pick up, water and wet materials as well as dry things; cool materials and materials warmed by the sun; soft and hard surfaces; things that make sounds (running water) or that can be struck, plucked, plinked, etc.; smells of all varities (flowers, bark, mud); shiny, bright objects and dull, dark ones; things both huge and tiny; high and low, places to look at and from; materials of every type, natural, synthetic, thin, thick and so on. The list is inexhaustible, and the larger the number of items on it that are include, the richer and more varied the environment will be for the child (Dattner, 1969, 44).

Water, sand and mud are basic ingredients in the outside center for young children. Mud? Yes. "No amount of clay or plasticene can replace the joy of play in plain, natural mud outside" (ACEI, Housing. . ., 61).

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The truth is that not many schools are willing to provide these basic experiences which are considered as essential for young children today as much as they have been through the ages (Baker, 1971). They should not be overlooked in assessing resources for equipping the outside area.

Often we make the mistake of limiting our outside development because of budget considerations. Lack of money, remember, was a creative force behind the British primary schools after World War II (Ibid). The willingness of teachers to interprete to parents is a key factor that will make the use of sand, water, mud and other messy projects acceptable in schools.

Other materials that are common to outside areas for young children are boards and hollow blocks, swings, slides and some sort of climbing unit. These pieces take various forms but are usually present in outside areas for young children. The variety of interpretations for such equipment is as unlimited as the creative people planning the areas.

There are several points of disagreement regarding some of the equipment and the function it serves that planners should be aware of. Swings, for example, are the cause for considerable disparity. Consider these viewpoints. Lady Allen of Hurtwood, a leading landscape architect and designer of playgrounds in Great Britain, calls the conventional heavy wood and metal swings "medieval torture contraptions" and asks, "What is the toll in eyes extracted or in brain damage by these lethal instruments of recreation?" (Friedburg, 1970, 57).

Marguerita Rudolph, author, lecturer and consultant in early childhood education says:

> There is one piece of popular standard playground equipment which I find least desirable from the point of view of both safety and good exercise for young children. This is the stationary swing--often a whole row of swings. (1973, 79)

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The unpleasant effect of these swings, Ms. Rudolph asserts is that they force the adults into being "nagging, nervous lookouts" (Ibid).

The Practical Handbook for Setting up a Kingergarten--and other pre-school programs from the National Kindergarten Association does not recommend swings (or merry-go-rounds and teeter-totters) on the basis that they are "not particularly conducive to either physical or social development and present hazards to children's safety (1971, 24)."

On the other hand, Dr. Katherine Baker, professor in child development for over twenty-five years, suggests at least two swings with soft seats for one group of children. (1969, 75) And this:

> . . .in addition to the special pleasures of swinging through the air and learning to pump, single swings offer something unique to children. We can think of no unit which so effectively and naturally insulates a child from the rest of the group (Fein and Clarke-Stewart, 1973, 229).

So the decision to include or exclude swings will be based on individual biases. Suggestions for cautionary measures in swing areas commonly include 1.) soft seats only, 2.) locating them away from normal traffic flow and 3.) fencing the area in some way so that only swingers are allowed in the area.

Sculptures are another source of controversy. How suitable are they for playgrounds? They are justified on the one hand for the play possibilities they present as props that can become whatever, whenever, children's imaginations dictate (Aaron, 1965, 78). "Play sculptures are distillations or abstractions of the characteristics which make up the play potential of natural forms (Ibid)". But, they are criticized on the other hand:

> No more static seesaw! No more immutable concrete turtles! Instead, a dynamic, ever changing and exciting environment, one in which a child can participate. Participate, be involved with, contribute and learn. This may sound farfetched, visionary and Utopian; the only thing that I find farfetched is the fact that it doesn't exist now (Friedburg, 1969, 11).

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For those considering sculpture these criteria may be helpful. Any elements which improve the play value of the interaction, of the child in his micro-environment is good design but if they appeal to someone other than the player, they are badly designed (Ellis, 1971).

Another simple guide is that the more general a form, the more freedom it allows children to impose their meanings on it and feel control over it (Dattner, 1969, 49).

Personal opinions and tastes, experiences and hopes will influence the planners' decisions. And while the feasibility of various pieces and kinds of equipment should be weighed, there is no perfect pattern for play spaces and no uniformly unacceptable one that is built on the considerations discussed. And no one item is significant over the total atmosphere and quality of space.

In planning, however, we should look beyond the superficial impact of equipment:

> There is equipment which deceives adults. At first glance it may seem unusually interesting or useful; later, in use by children, it proves to be no different from its traditional counterpart, and in some instances it may even be more limiting to play. . .A slide framed by a large, brightly colored elephant cut-out, while delightful to the adult eye, is still a simple unit to a child. The climb-in-on-around 'space ship' is as simple as its traditional counterpart, the jungle gym; in addition, the 'space ship' may not lend itself to development into complex units which can be varied in 'play ideas' from day to day. Again, it appears that our responses as thinking adults sometimes interferes with realistic appraisal of equipment in terms of young children.
>
> Although traditional equipment is 'old hat' to children and has perhaps become traditional because it supplies important (and often unique) experiences. In making decisions about equipment--both traditional and novel--think through just what experiences it makes available to children (Fein and Clarke-Stewart, 1973, 229).

What are some basic considerations in making these decisions? Two main requirements of outside play spaces are that they give children as wide a range of different kinds of experience as possible and that the children

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should have as much control as possible over their own experiences (Dattner, 1971, 18). These points are made by most of the people writing and researching the subject.

Friedburg lists the principles of flexibility, adaptability, challenge and economy and states that most manufactured equipment is designed to sell to adults and does not, necessarily, reflect a child's needs (1969, 5 and 10). General standards for choosing creative play equipment are listed in Creative Outdoor Play Areas: Equipment should be 1.) simple, natural and inexpensive, 2.) unlimiting and interpretable, 3.) moveable and/or adaptable, 4.) providing for large and small muscle action, 5.) contributing to preceptual-motor development and 6.) attractive (Miller, 1972, 40).

Questions which should be asked in evaluating manufactured equipment such as that listed in the New York Parks Council's list, "Manufacturer of Playground Equipment" are, Which manipulates the child in a greater variety of ways? Which allows the child to manipulate it in the greater number of ways? Which allows for cooperation among children? Which preempts the behavior of the child the least? and Which item maximizes the variability of the behavior? Dr. Ellis, whose research on the nature of play was introduced earlier in the paper, considers the last two questions the most important (Ellis, 1971, 40). The problems, according to Ellis, have less to do with equipment and more to do with our limited concept of the playground's function (Ibid).

The introduction of primary colors is considered a valuable way to heighten interest.

Community Playthings Company advises customers to look for the following characteristics in choosing equipment:

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Good playthings should be:

1.) free of detail as possible
2.) versatile in use
3.) capable of involving the child
4.) large, easily manipulated
5.) of warm material, pleasant to touch
6.) durable
7.) working as intended
8.) easily comprehendable
9.) sufficient in quantity and roominess
10.) an encouragement to cooperative play
11.) priced according to durability (Criteria. . . see Articles and Briefer References)

An anaylsis of materials and equipment should show two basic categories, items to make things with and items to be things with (Aaron, 1965, 120).

Said in different ways, these guidelines all contain some common elements and should be useful in helping the planner discriminate wisely.

The choices made will determine the behavior patterns of the children who will use the space. Researchers associate predictable behavioral responses with various kinds of materials and equipment. When provided with a large supply of simple materials, available to all children, attention becomes focused on what can be created. But a large supply of more complicated toys with only one or two of a kind is likely to stimulate competition and quarreling. Children with less structured equipment devised play of their own when the toys were removed. Toys found to lead to cooperation were sleds, wagons, housekeeping toys, slides, tricycles with footholds, swings and dolls. These are the findings cited by Dr.'s Fein and Clarke-Stewart (1973, 230).

Finally, preparation of the staff, parents and the children must be a consideration. Workshops with teachers and parents exploring, together, possibilities for outside areas will probably yield the best support. A letter from teachers explaining the outside program and what to expect from it may help in interpreting and opening up the doors. It will be the

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responsibility of the school to know and be able to verbalize the purposes and value of extended outside time and much will depend on the extent to which the individual teacher is convinced. Lawrence Frank's "Play is Valid" is an excellent presentation covering many of the issues discussed in this paper. This article and other professional position publications are available in quantities from Childhood Education International, 3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016. Also, bulletins such as What are Nursery Schools For? and What are Kindergarten's For? are assets to help sell the fundamentals of the total school environment concept.

It has been my experience, however, that most parents do not have to be sold on opportunities for getting their children outside more. Daily outside play should be assumed. Of course, there are cases that will have to be treated with sensitivity in developing the "outdoor literacy" spoken of by Peggy Miller (1972, 13):

> Some children are 'house plants' and do not go outside to participate in the activities and fresh air. In inclement weather a covered shelter makes it possible for children to be out of doors. . . Eliminate the idea that outside play is only for warm, sunny days. It is delightful to play in the snow, rain, or wind if properly dressed (Taylor, 1964, 6).

Preparation of staff and children regarding proper clothing is essential. And parents will want to be reassured that their children will not be forced to be outside in severe weather conditions. Being outside when there is much of interest to do has little of the discomfort associated with being outside, standing and waiting for the bell to ring.

WHAT ABOUT SAFETY? It is generally known that a child will attempt to do only that which he feels he can do safely, under normal conditions. Of course, the adult in the outside area will be aware of safety factors. The teacher of young children is always tuned in to them intensively. Maintenance of safety out of doors will be merely an extension of the communication established inside. To be considered are equipment condition,

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traffic control, height and stability of equipment, ease of supervision, kinds of surfaces, hand or footholds and grips and weather conditions (Miller, 1972, 23). And, I would add, a sensitivity to individual problems on a given day. Is someone feeling grumpy and likely to get angry at someone else? We have learned, too, that almost without fail, the child whose parents are away from the home for some reason is likely to be hurt in some minor way--a fall, a bump.

Safety is a question of underlying concern for the children. The key is to provide a situation that is right for their limitations and potentials in order that they can gain confidence in their abilities to manage their bodies successfully. Beyond that, to know about personal situations that may be potential causes of disruption and accidents and to be watchful and aware in a nonrestrictive way. Safety becomes "measured care: with experienced adults who will use language and example to teach and who have the physical endurance and sensitivity to respond to individuals as well as to oversee a group of children outside (Stone, 1970, 48, 49).

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

All considerations met, how can we measure success? "The proof of a good playground lies in its use" (Ibid, 16). How will an outside area, developed on the basis of this paper be used? Every consideration used in the planning can be used again as an evaluative tool. The children and the adults will respond and react. The success or failure of the project will depend on the human element. Likewise, the successful use of the outside, children having direct access to the playground to go in and out as freely as they can move about their classrooms (provided there is adequate supervision) should be a reflection of a growing sense of wholeness in the school environment.

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> . . .the opportunity to be outside the building should not be an escape from the classroom. In a number of infant and junior schools, children move freely from room to room without question. They engage in many different kinds of work during the day, some of it involving the whole body, some of it quiet and relaxed. Going outside does not, therefore, mean a release from severe constraints. The explosion of energy that always occurs as children rush out onto the playground does not turn into violent or hectic and pointless activity. If it does, something is wrong inside the school (Murrow, 1971, 101).

We can measure success with our eyes and ears and our ability to interprete observable behavior.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

In capsule form, the following is an outline of the common criticism of traditional playgrounds and the lack of value attached to play in this country

1. They were conceived in the late eighteen hundreds to provide safe play spaces for children living in hostile and dangerous cities.

2. Created play spaces were needed to provide, artificially, the conditions found in nature when natural areas were no longer part of the city. They do not provide natural play conditions.

3. American playgrounds are designed for the insurance companies. Obviously. . .not. . .for the child (Friedburg, 1966, 36).

4. Thirty per cent of all childhood accidents occur in school and municipal playgrounds (Aaron, 1965, 47).

5. There are virtually no mandatory safety standards or requirements for outdoor play equipment although statistics show the situation is acute. Home playground equipment is responsible for injuries to one million children each year and of this total, some 160,000 are permanently disabled or killed. The chief hazard is the popular combination swing, seesaw and slide unit (Edwards, Ed., 1972, 20, n10, 1).

6. Obstacles of traditional playgrounds are:
   1. The spaces are used for a myriad of activities taking place with cross purposes.
   2. The spaces are inappropriate in scale to children's size and capacities to react to danger.
   3. The equipment is designed without the needs of children's emotional or chronological age in mind.
   4. The equipment consists of specialized rides that restrict children to one type of activity and make them wait for long periods (Ibid, 70).

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7. Friedburg: We know it is a playground because of its sterility and seal of authority. . .Presumably the city fathers have already built playgrounds. . .So where do we go for space to play? (1969, 16)

8. Stone: In the enormously expensive "fortress" (traditional playground) only the children move and in designing against vandalism, "it's vitality is somehow frozen". (1970, 34).

9. Playground opportunities should challenge physically and cognitively but the average length of visit to Philadelphia playgrounds in one quarter of an hour (Ellis, 1971, 23).

10. If we are to hope for a reorientation and a recognition of the vital role of play, we should critically examine the courses and programs in our schools of education, recognizing the often unspoken disapproval of play, except perhaps of motor activities and competitive games on the playground (Frank, 1968, 434).

11. Many schools are unwilling or reluctant to give adequate time for play, or artistic activites and nonacademic interests. They refuse to recognize that most of the basic learning for living and social life cannot be taught formally but must be learned through daily living, playing and enjoying the opportunities at each stage of the life cycle" (bid, 440).

12. Although they are the most deeply affected group of users, they are presently the least able to influence the design of their environment. Not only are children seldom consulted about these matters, but their needs are often completely forgotten when the facilities are being designed. . .It is as if children were supplied with shoes with absolutely no regard for the size of their feet--the size of the shoes having been determined by persons who would never have to wear them on the basis of what sizes were available (Dattner, 1969, 33).

13. The typical New York playground (which is typical of 99 per cent of all the playgrounds in the United States) could not be a more hostile environment for children's play if it had been designed for the express purpose of preventing play. Characteristically, it is an unbroken expanse of concrete or asphalt pavement, punctuated by the forlorn presence of metal swings, a slide, and some seesaws. Not only does this design lack any possibility for real play; the most interesting activities are prohibited anyway by signs saying "NO" in huge letters, followed by a list of all the things children like to do. The most admirable feature of these playgrounds is that they have been built to withstand the abuses of children and the ravages of time, and so may provide future historians with a wealth of archeological material concerning that age in the development of our cities when ease of maintenance was an idea worshiped with near-religious fervor. A recent article in the New York Times summed up this attitude perfectly: "Several years ago two 350 pound gorillas were turned loose on a new set of swings in Central Park. When it was found that the animals did not destroy the equipment, the playground was pronounced fit for

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New York City's children. . .The simplest maintenance measure, to be sure, would have been to exclude children, but that was clearly a Utopian solution" (Ibid, 34-36).

14. If the business of the churches is the developing of the spirit of love in the world, then the promotion of play is one of its most sacred duties. It is surely no small reproach to the church that through all the Christian centuries it has discovered so little of the pedagogy of love, and that it has left to the modern social movements the development of the spirit of brotherhood and democracy which its great founder everywhere taught. If we wish the world to be a warmer and more loving place, one of our first duties will be the promotion of play and sociability of the right sort among the children (Curtis, 1917, 84).

15. But the greatest sinner against the spirit of play has been the school itself. Among all primitive peoples, the child has no considerable occupation except play, and it is only within a hundred years or so that sutdy has been the work of most children. We now require the child to go to school for five or six hours a day and often give him tasks to complete at home after school hours are over. We have taken the time that in all previous ages was devoted to play and have devoted it to study. We have taken the energy out of which play developed and turned it into other channels, and in our great cities, we have built up the vacant places on which the children might play, until we have almost crowded it out of their lives (Ibid, 9).

16. Dattner: Since play is actually a child's way of learning about his environment and about himself, administrators ought to stop thinking of playgrounds as athletic facilities. The playground is as important a learning institution as a school, and should be given equivalent priority. The vision of a public school classroom devoid of books, teachers, blackboards, and furniture would give a city administrator apoplexy, but a similar situation in a playground passes for normal in all but the most forward-looking American communities (1969, 40).

Thus goes the most frequently expressed criticism.

AND NOW THE CHALLENGE

Criticism is not useful unless it offers alternatives of action in constructive, realistic fashion. The challenge is to do it!

We have been exposed to ample vantage points from which to consider the various aspects in developing outside areas for young children. But first, we must be willing to see and hear. And then, to do. It is imperative that planners or those in a position to plan, make the effort to look into the many resources available, most of which are alive with

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practical solutions. The references used for this paper, for instance, are rich with descriptions, photographs, guides, "how to" lists and help for every step of the way.

Implementation should take the form of galvanizing parents and community people, (teenagers are a potential energy and idea pool) who can, with guidance from people who know child development, translate their enthusiasm into a place where children can work and play with joy.

When money is the issue, committed people will raise it as they do for other projects they value. found spaces and equipment for children's centers is an inspirational book for poeple who have become infected with the possibilities that abound just by using what we have and can find in the way of resources (Passantino, 1972).

And let's not forget the children!

> . . .children and their parents should participate in building their own play equipment whenever possible. Now that adults are becoming aware of this, they can be seen looking for materials for play equipment in lumber yards, telephone companies, garages, marinas, construction sites, workshops and their own attics (Ibid, 46).

Jonathan Hale has said in a building types study on child care centers for Architectural Record, "Building a child care center is an exercise in doing more with less--much less" (1972, 129). And that is true. But books like Children's Rooms and Play Yards that is carried by local stores like Agway attest to the readily available supply of ideas to supplement resources in local libraries. And school people need to release and apply their own creativity! It is neither a necessary conclusion nor true that this kind of development is beyond the capacity of local people.

We know, we believe that it is the inexpensive, natural and free materials that will prove most interesting and of greatest learning value in the play/work of young children.

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The most noteable development in changing traditional play spaces began in Denmark in 1943 when Professor C. T. Sorenson, a well-know landscape architect, noted that children preferred to play in junk yards (Dattner, 1969). He established the Emdrup Playground in a new housing development outside Copenhagen, furnished it with waste materials and a full-time supervisor and gave birth to the concept of adventure playgrounds, sometimes called junk playgrounds.

This movement has not spread as rapidly in the United States as it did in Europe because of insurance difficulties and the offensive nature of children's play messes to many people.

One recently developed adventure playground was establsihed in Milpitas, California, where twenty-six truck loads of lumber were dumped into a fenced area 125' X 125'. (Saturday Review of Education, March, 1973).

"I think we could have the most modern playground in the world," says the town's mayor, "and the children would still be out in that heap of lumber" (Ibid).

LET'S CHECK ON OURSELVES

Having considered many aspects that are involved in developing and maintaining outside areas for young children, there are certain questions and points that we can put together to create a checklist for evaluative purposes.

WILL YOU JOIN ME OUTSIDE?

Look at the outside area.

_____How does it make you feel?

_____What does it say?

_____What does it make you want to do?

_____What can children learn there?

_____How does it reflect the adults' knowledge of child development?

_____Who is responsible for the outside area?

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_____Through what channels could you work to plan a workshop devoted to the outside?

_____Are you willing to help?

_____What do you believe the purpose of the outside area to be?

_____What do you believe about young children and the way they grow and learn? What is the place of play?

_____What are the program goals of your school/center? How are they translated into opportunities outside?

_____What should the role of the adult be? How can parents help?

_____Is there both sun and shade?

_____Is there shelter for outside work in bad weather?

_____Are there cages and pens for visiting animals?

_____Are there opportunities for doing?

_____Are there provisions for both active, dramatic paly as well as private, contemplative work?

_____Is there an opportunity for the children to change or make an impact on the area?

_____Are there provisions for both large and small muscle development?

_____Is the area challenging without being threatening?

_____In what ways will the area stimulate curiosity?

_____What opportunities exist for extending inside lessons outside with experiences, experiments?

_____What part of a day are children outside?

_____How can the teacher extend that time?

_____Are there opportunities for adventure, building, throwing, balancing, climbing, jumping? What else?

_____Is the area aesthetically pleasing? Logically and safely arranged?

_____Is there a garden? Game area? Ample room for free movement?

_____What are local and state safety and professional standards?

_____How much space is available? How many children use it at once?

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_____How much complexity and variety does it offer?

_____How many play and work opportunities are available at one time? Equal to or exceeding the number of children?

_____What are the interesting topographical features? How can you add topographical changes?

_____Is fencing adequate and appropriate?

_____Are there defined interest and learning centers?

_____Is the traffic flow logical, inspiring, safe?

_____What materials are available that the children can manipulate?

_____Is there water, sand, boards, boxes? What else?

_____Is the equipment safe? Are the surfaces under equipment soft? What experiences do the equipment offer?

_____Are adults willing to interprete the outside program to parents and enlist their help?

_____Do the principles flexibility, adaptability, challenge and economy apply?

_____Are there things to make with and to be with?

_____What materials and equipment require cooperation?

_____What resources are available in the form of materials, manpower and money?

_____What behavior results from the use of the outside area?

DOES THE OUTSIDE AREA SAY "YES" OR "NO"?

AN EXAMPLE

A private nursery in London, a leader in nursery education for many years, provides its children with one of the most exciting and imaginative environments we saw in a year in England. . .rooms open onto a garden. . .The garden is ideal for all sorts of exploration; it is enclosed on all sides, yet trees and varied contours give the illusion of space. At one end is a partially covered area for outdoor play in bad weather. The rest of the garden is open. Its center slopes down to a pit, where the children play all sorts of games or make mudpies. (There is a hose handy for this purpose.)

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The garden is full of unusual humps of land, bushes, flowers, rock formations and natural growth of all kinds. All the climbing apparatus blends into the feeling of the garden. Needless to say, this space is used just as much for learning and play as the area inside. The children go in and out as they wish, and there is always a teacher outside to help with building schemes, settle disputes, observe and talk. This school is an example of how an unusual plan, combined with teaching of the highest quality, contributes to the success of an exceptional school.

Schools which use space imaginatively can no longer be inward-looking. They have abandoned the idea that the walls of the classroom mark the boundaries of the child's learning (Murrow, 1971, 204-5).

A RESPONSIBILITY

As man continues to overpopulate the world and destroy his surroundings, teachers have a tremendous obligation to bring children closer to the natural world. As they grow older, these children will not be interested in preserving a local forest or a city's river if they have never appreciated these areas in some special way--if they have not come to an understanding of the complex living communities that each supports. Environmental studies can continue the child's natural interest in the world of living things and can help him to understand that he is an essential part of the world--that his connections with plants and animals are very real and concrete. Hopefully, as ecological problems become more acute, environmental studies will become as it has in a few schools, less a subject area and increasingly a distinct approach to much of primary education. (Ibid, 223).

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